

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1806

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the illegal killing and possession of wildlife.

Brief Description: Increasing penalties for the illegal killing and possession of wildlife.

Sponsors: Representatives Alexander, Grant, Mastin, Buck, Johnson, Butler, Hatfield, Kessler, Sheldon, Chandler, Thompson, Regala, Anderson, Pennington, Clements, Kenney, Sullivan, Blalock, Conway, Mulliken, Tokuda, Constantine, Mason and Schoesler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/19/97, 2/27/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield; Pennington and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: A person convicted of the illegal killing or possession of wildlife must reimburse the state in amounts specified in statute. These reimbursements are deposited in the Public Safety and Education Account.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that wildlife is of great ecological, recreational, aesthetic, and economic value to the people of the state. The Legislature also finds that the illegal taking and possession of certain valuable wildlife species is increasing at an alarming rate and that the state should be paid restitution for the loss of individual members of these wildlife species.

The amount of required restitution is increased for the illegal killing or possession of moose, mountain sheep, mountain goat, elk, deer, black bear, cougar, mountain caribou, grizzly bear, and other wildlife species classified as endangered by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. New restitution categories are established for trophy

animal deer, elk, and mountain sheep, and a new subsection defines what constitutes a trophy animal.— A person assessed a restitution for the illegal killing or possession of wildlife will have his or her hunting license revoked and all hunting privileges suspended until the restitution is paid.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill provides a slightly different restitution schedule than the original bill. The substitute bill adds the provision regarding the loss of hunting privileges and removes a provision that would have allowed a court to retain a percentage of the penalty collected. The substitute bill substitutes the use of the word restitution— for reimbursement— throughout and makes other technical corrections.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Up to one-fourth of our big game wildlife is being taken illegally. Several states have increased their fines and reduced poaching. These animals are being taken just for their trophy status. This bill could provide a deterrent. The bill brings value to wildlife, though the penalty amount is still low compared to market values. Illegal hunting steals money away from local economies. Sportsmen catch the brunt when there's illegal hunting. Poachers aren't hunters; they're businessmen.

Testimony Against: It might be good to also take away hunting privileges until the fine is paid. A different fee schedule could be considered. There are some technical problems with the wording in the existing law.

Testified: Representative Gary Alexander, prime sponsor; Sgt. Dan Brinson, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Mike Neil, Washington Game Warden Association; Greg Schirato, Washington Association of Professional Biologists; and Dick Gates, sportsman (all in favor); and Yvonne Pettus, Office of the Administrator of the Courts (con).